

RUSSIA AND THE WEST IN IRAN

troops that had been in northwestern Iran were evacuated during 1918. The independence or counterrevolutionary movements in Transcaucasia and Transcaspia created, for some time, a protective belt between Iran and Russia. During 1919 British but not Russian troops were in Iran. In 1920, however, Soviet troops reappeared on Iranian territory. This was due to the collapse of free Azerbaijan and to the rout of the counterrevolutionary armies of General Denikin in southern Russia. Beaten in the spring of 1920, the remnants of Denikin's forces fell back into Azerbaijan and some ships of his flotilla anchored in Baku. The Red Army, pursuing the Whites, invaded Azerbaijan in April and, as mentioned earlier, put an end to the independence of the Republic. The remaining White forces embarked on ships at Baku and escaped to the Iranian port of Enzeli (Pahlavi), with the Red fleet, commanded by Raskolnikov, on their heels. The Whites encamped at Enzeli under British protection. The Red flotilla on May 18 opened fire on the British and White Russian vessels in the port and bombarded British land installations. The British commander, General Champain, entered into a parley with Raskolnikov, who declared that the Soviets were not fighting against the British nor against the Iranians but were trying only to recapture the White fleet and troops. When the British liaison officer stated that the White troops were in a neutral territory and, being disarmed and interned, could not be extradited, Raskolnikov answered: "It is not the prisoners of war that we claim, but the rebels who have provoked internal disorders in Russia." ^c Eventually the British, too weak in numbers and equipment to offer

serious re-
sistance, withdrew to Qazvin and later, following a
general policy,
withdrew from Iran altogether. The Red Army units
disembarked in
Enzeli.

Soon a Soviet expeditionary force was in occupation
of the whole
province of Gilan. It was composed of regular Red
Army units, of
sailors from Kronstadt, of Communist Azerbaijani
troops, and of
armed Iranian workers formerly employed in the
Baku harbor.
Teheran protested against this violation of Iranian
territorial in-

e A description of these events in greater detail and the
quotation may be found
in "La Politique du gouvernement des Soviets en Perse," by
Georges Ducrocq,
Revue du monde musulman, Dec., 1922, pp. 84-180.